DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 178 245 RC 011 672

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TITLE An Infinity of Mirrors: Chicanos and American Education.
PUB DATE May 79
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at a lecture at East Texas State University (Commerce, TX, May 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; Bilingual Education; College Role; Culture Conflict; Educational Discrimination; Educational Experience; *Educationally Disadvantaged; *Educational Needs; Educational Responsibility; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Government Role; Higher Education; Language Role; *Mexican Americans; School Holding Power; School Integration; *School Role; Spanish Speaking
IDENTIFIERS *Chicanos; Hispanos

ABSTRACT

Significant changes are needed in the education of Chicano children, changes that range from the earliest Head Start levels through the college years. American schools reflect the dominant Anglo-American culture and so retain the societal status quo. By perpetuating Anglocentrism, schools have trampled on the cultural and linguistic dignity of Chicano youth. Many Chicano children enter first grade knowing little or no English and are catastrophically and traumatically confronted with a learning environment in a foreign language they cannot deal with. Bilingual programs are often administered with old approaches that have failed in the past and will continue to fail in the future. Teachers may expect less of Chicano students and with this attitude engender failure and disappointment instead of achievement. Relatively few Chicanos manage to get through high school; even fewer go on to college. Those attempting to secure a college education face such problems as entrance requirement obstacles, discriminatory admission and retention rules, poor secondary school preparation, inadequate finances, and courses irrelevant to Chicanos needs and concerns. Colleges and universities, the public school systems, and the forces of government must all join together to instill into the concept of equal educational opportunity a new vigor, life and meaning. (DS)

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AN INFINITY OF MIRRORS: CHICANOS AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

By Felipe de Ortego y Gasca

I

I remember, once when I was very young, going to a circus with my Uncle in Chicago. Of all the shows, I was most impressed by the hall-of-mirrors. Unaware of the geometry of the illusion, I remember how awed I was by what seemed to me to be an infinity of mirrors. For as I looked into the mirrors, I could see my image, increasingly reduced, reflected in still more mirrors in seemingly unending reflections in the already reflected mirrors. In another part of the hall-of-mirrors were a number of "funny" mirrors which distorted one's image depending upon how far or near one stood to the reflecting surface. I was both amused by and suspicious of the comical and grotesque reflections of myself. And no matter how secure I may have been in the knowledge that the mirrors were just optical pranks meant to engender only good-humored laughter by others or oneself, I could not shake that uneasy feeling about the veracity of the images reflected in those mirrors. Eliu Carranza, the Chicano philosopher, has marvelled at the hall-of-mirrors phenomenon as the mind seeks "to come to a realization of itself in terms of one

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Presented as an invited lecture at East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas, May 1979.

distortion after another reflected in such mirrors." Was it possible, I reasoned, that some people actually saw me as I appeared in those ludicrous mirrors? The thought choked off my laughter in mid-stride, as it were. And no longer was I amused. Instead I sulked out angrily, confused and bewildered. Many years were to pass before I understood fully that moment in my life, before I came to fondle it as a great grain of truth revealing to me profundities I am still grappling with. Time and again my thoughts have wandered back to that experience, and each time I've garnered some significant truths--either about myself or the world about me--from that brief and singular moment. As I survey the academic condition of Chicanos today, I wonder if perhaps they are not regarded by their reflections in those mischievous halls-of-mirrors rather than by their true selves. Standing behind Chicanos in those halls-of-mirrors, Anglos have perceived only a monodimensional view of Chicanos, seeing their faces in those grotesquely distorting mirrors. This has been our lot not only in the academy but in all other spheres of American activity. The distorted image thus came to be the reality. Chicanos were consequently regarded more as stereotypes than people.

Like other minority groups, Mexican-Americans were,

and continue to be, inaccurately and superficially represented in literature, movies, TV, and other mass media. This has sometimes been due to prejudice, but also to those "well-meaning romanticists," who have seriously distorted the image of the Mexican-American for the sake of their art. Mexican-Americans have been characterized at both ends of a spectrum of human behavior (seldom in the middle) as untrustworthy, villainous, ruthless, tequila-drinking, philandering machos, or else as courteous, devout, and fatalistic peasants who are to be treated more as pets than people. More often than not, Mexicans have been cast as either bandits or lovable rogues; as hot-blooded, sexually animated creatures or passive, humble servants.

Who are these people, these Chicanos who vaulted into the national limelight during the 60's and 70's? Ethnically they are Americans of Mexican ancestry--Indian, Mestizo, and Spanish. Religiously they run the gamut of identities. And politically they have been as disenfranchised as Blacks, although traditionally they have been identified as Democrats. Realizing that neither major political party in the United States has responded to their needs, some Chicanos formed their own political party in 1969, La Raza Unida, and made significant political gains in the

early 70's where Raza Unida challenged traditional political structures and machines. Ideologically, numbers of Chicanos united behind the Chicano movement with its tenets of chicanismo and carnalismo (the former is a recognition of their socio-political and cultural emergence as a potent force for change in American society; the latter is the spirit of a brotherhood that binds them ineluctably one to the other, regardless of their position or station in life).

Some Chicanos saw themselves as the mediating force in the black-white conflict. Although classified as whites, many Chicanos came to regard themselves as members of the Third World. Unfortunately, however, since Chicanos were classified as white, some school systems used them as a means of complying with integration mandates by mixing them with blacks. The result was a continuation of the same kind of unequal education both groups received separately, only now under the legal aegis of "integration."

Heretofore, Chicanos have been struggling in a sort of no-man's-land, caught, (like Hamlet crawling between heaven and earth,) between the polarizing forces of their cultural-linguistic Hispanic heritage and their political-linguistic American context. They have become frustrated by the struggle between the system which seeks to refashion them

in its own image and the knowledge of who and what they really are.

In the greater sense of the word, Chicanos have always been "Americans," more so than Anglo-Americans; they were here before the Irish and the Italians, before the Poles, before the Hungarians. They were as Carey McWilliams, put it, in his book North From Mexico, very much a part of the landscape when the Anglo-American arrived. Yet despite this and their size in numbers, Chicanos have been the most shamefully neglected minority in the United States. In the Southwest where approximately nine million of them live, they have subsisted on levels of survival well below national norms. The reason for this, many Chicano argue, is that they are victims of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty which identified those who came with the conquered lands of the Southwest as a defeated people. And those who came afterwards in the great migrations of the early 190\ s have been equally victimized by stereotypes engendered by the Mexican-American War. The consequence in recent years has been an increasing social and political consciousness to the point of demanding reformation of the socio-economic structure which has kept them subordinated these many years.

For the Chicano, the year 1848 has particular

significance not because it is the year of the Communist Manifesto but because it is the year of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty which brought into the United States the vast area of the American Southwest along with its conquered people. But 1848 is not the beginning of the Mexican-American on American soil, for the Mexican-American, as the product of the Indian races of Mexico and the Spanish conquistadores, traces his ancestry on this continent back to the dim and laboriously recorded origins of the great pre-Columbian Mexican civilizations as well as the transported civilization of Spain with its cultural mixture of Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Visigothic and Arabic characteristics.

Only recently have Chicanos received any kind of attention in this country, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute the second largest minority group in the United States, and that outside of speakers of English they constitute the single largest linguistic group in the United States. Most Chicanos live in the five-state area of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California, with the largest single concentration in Los Angeles. But there are Chicanos throughout most of the United States, from Washington to Florida, and from California to Maine. Almost three million Mexican-Americans

are to be found in the Ohio Valley crescent from Madison, Wisconsin, to Erie, Pennsylvania.

If Mexicans are the sons of La Malinche, as Octavio Paz declares, then Chicanos are no less Montezuma's children. Just as the European once considered Mexicans to be men in the margin of universal history, so too have Anglo-Americans considered Chicanos to be creatures in the margin of American history. Since 1848, when Chicanos were bartered into the American way of life, they have truly become "stepchildren" of the United States, as George I. Sanchez poignantly commented in his classic study of the "forgotten people."

Despite the fact that Chicanos number some 10 to 12 million in the United States and that they constitute by far the largest linguistic minority in the country (outside the speakers of English), far less is really known about them than about other minority groups, as Carey McWilliams has pointed out. But the important point is that, despite the Mexican immigration to the United States during the 1920's and 30's (and even the Mexican bracero program of World War II, which prompted many of them to stay in the U.S.), the majority of Chicanos, unlike immigrant groups from other parts of the world, have never been "immigrants" in the Southwest.

They were an indigenous people "Americanized" by the accident of conquest, just as the Iberians were Romanized by the accident of conquest. But unlike the Iberians who were brought into the mainstream of Roman civilization, the majority of Chicanos have been denied access to the mainstream of American life. And unlike the Romans who were tolerant of their linguistic minorities, Americans of the Southwest have consistently penalized Chicanos who have persisted in retaining their linguistic heritage.

II

It is only fitting that we seek significant changes in the education of Chicano children, particularly in the academy. For indeed we have come to see the cruciality of such education, and its effects on the subsequent life of our people.

In Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, Marshall McLuhan reminds us that "in a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message," that "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action," and that the "content of any medium blinds us to the character

of the medium." Now what do these words really mean and what do they portend for Chicanos and American education?

To begin with, let us consider American schools and their character. Most of us, I think, have come to think of American schools as the instrument or medium for changing the character of American society. But the truth of the matter is that American society so controls schools that little or imperceptible change takes place in American society as a consequence of schools. Quite the opposite actually takes place. Schools really change in conformity to the norms of American society. That indeed some schools are innovative turns out to be the exception rather than the rule. But invariably such innovation represents accomodations to the demands of our highly accelerated technologized society. Indeed, American science has brought about changes in the way we do things and upon our collective and individual life styles. "The most obvious requirement this places on the schools," as John W. Gardner has pointed out, "is to provide effective education in science and mathematics." We can see thus that education responds to the needs of society, not the individual. A case in point today is the issue of busing. Instead of responding affirmatively to the educational philosophy embedded in the issue of busing, large sectors of American society

have responded negatively to the implications for social change inherent in the busing of children to schools representing equal educational opportunity, notwithstanding the fact that busing has been a fact of American education for a significant number of decades.

In short, schools are therefore not instruments or media for changing the character of American society. On the contrary, they are in fact instruments and media for preserving the societal status quo. For the fact of the matter is that the educational process is the medium "by which a culture transmits itself across the generations." Consequently, this transmission function of American education will brook no tolerance of efforts to alter that function, no matter how much we may as individual teachers or as members of educational organizations stress the ideal role of education. For ideals are more honored in their breach than in their observance. To me, the message of the educational medium is thus loud and clear.

Conceptually, the Academy still reflects Anglo American superiority with only token gestures thus far in the direction of change, gestures which are little better than huesos thrown to snarling prides of lions in an effort to keep them at bay. And what has passed for education in this country has been little better than

indoctrination to the interests of the power elite of the United States who outrightly dictate that we teach our children about the perils of communism than about the perils of poverty, hunger, and deprivation, perils which threaten their existence more immediately than ideologies. What we have then are schools shaping and controlling the scale and form of our action and association and blinding us to the character of the medium--in this case, the schools. And it is in this regard that the schools have most blatantly sought to transform all American children into replicas of Anglo models. This kind of replication is little better than biological cloning now being attempted genetically. Educational cloning has done it with the "common curriculum," a concept which in its incipiency assumed the existence of homogeneity in American society.

And, indeed, that assumption was not altogether amiss. For the common denominator in early American society was the European heritage of its individual members. Anomolous clusters of peoples of non-European stock were considered insignificant and their assimilation into the Anglo-European cultural mainstream was quickly achieved despite their "outcast" heritage. However, the degree of assimilation of "outcast" groups depended upon

their color and linguistic acceptability. Thus, non-whites early experienced cultural exclusion in America, although many--like the Blacks--became Anglos in all but physiognamy and color.

To fully understand the sociopolitical implications of the message the educational medium is transmitting to us let us first consider the form and function of American education. The house that Jack built is not the house as Thomas Paine envisioned its construction; nor is it the house Chicanos have built. The house Jack built is an Anglo house, built from Anglo blueprints with all of the Anglo values necessary for existence in an Anglo society. Unfortunately, Jack went in for building in a big way; he didn't stop with just his house. Indeed not. The blueprint for his house became the cornerstone for building his society as well, including all of its institutions. The schools are thus part of the house that Jack built. And that may be the crux of the problem. Had Jack stuck to just his own house, building it the way he wanted it, to his own specifications--predicated on his special cultural-linguistic necessities--then perhaps the educational crisis facing American society today could have been averted. For when Jack went to building his school, he saw that structure as simply an extension of his own house. He

gave little thought to the fact that the blueprint for the school should have required community input, representing the various perspectives and cultural backgrounds of its citizens, not to mention their linguistic diversity. Jack assumed that what was good for him was good for all.

In point of fact, Jack wasn't altogether far off. For when he began building his school, the community he lived in reflected a fair kind of homogeneity that saw no quarrel with Jack's school. The history of early American education was simply an extension of English education, though not as encompassing or efficient, given the non-contiguous character of that colonial enterprise. Still, early American education mirrored in little the goals and objectives of education in the homeland. And as Bernard Bailyn informs us, "the forms of education assumed by the first generation of settlers in America were a direct inheritance from the medieval past." The basis of education in England and the American colonies thus "lay secure within the continuing traditions of an integrated unified culture." And that continuity, however much it diminished in the 18th and 19th centuries, continued nevertheless to influence the evolving models of American education. Well into the 20th century, few American educators questioned the reality of that continuity, despite the visibly altered

cultural and ethnic composition of the United States. In fact, the fiction of that continuity grew stronger and more emphatic, institutionalizing unalterably the notions of the common curriculum.

In brief, the common curriculum fostered the "come-and-get-it" philosophy of education. That is, education--its goals and objectives clearly delineated and thriving hardily from its past successes--was ready and waiting, available to one and all who wanted it. The chief motivation was desire. Little thought was given to refashioning education to keep apace with the times. For education, like the church, became an institution which had come to believe in its own rituals, few of its priestly teachers and administrators were cognizant of the hardening arteries already afflicting the body education they had unknowingly stifled. Attempts to revivify the victim have included more of the same medicine which has only intermittently sparked a breath of life in the afflicted body. No systematic or long range cure for the ills of education appears in the offing. The symptoms continue to be treated with little regard for the malady.

Serious suggestions to attack the problem of education at their roots have met with guarded approval by the powers that be, for in essence most American educators and teachers

believe fervidly in the efficacy of the tried and true methods of teaching and learning. And to suggest that the fault lies not with the students but with themselves and the institution is a monstrous heresy which must be immediately quelled. Half-heartedly, concessions to compensatory education have been made by educators on the chance that perhaps their efforts could be strengthened by strengthening the deficiencies of those students who are ill-prepared for the common curriculum. Indeed, they reason, the problem lies with the student still, not the common curriculum which was after all designed to produce "good" American men and women.

At heart, American education differs little in function from education in other countries. However, after the advent of democracy public education was regarded as "an instrument for diminishing the degree of social stratification" in American society. Indeed, thirty or forty years ago most public school teachers thought they were educating for democracy. This was before Brown vs. Board of Education (1954).

Other functions of American education were seen as utilitarian in purpose, providing training for specific social roles. Eventually this function was broadened to include training for public and civic responsibility. An ancillary function was to train citizens in character and

proper principles. At the heart of these functions the teacher was seen as the guardian of educational tradition and the textbook writer as the high priest. The textbook was supposed to be the repository of the highest values of the society. That these values have until recent times been a panorama of fantasy has distressed few educators let alone parents. Textbooks have become fictitious models of life, models which have fostered the misconceptions and stereotypes of bygone ages. Schools and textbooks became, thus, instruments for shaping and controlling our actions and behavior and for binding us psychologically to the character of American society as fashioned by the dominant culture.

The consequence of this practice has precipitated the current dilemma in American education: that is, the necessity of appropriating significantly more money for education while being assailed from all sides with the suggestion that American education has somehow become a colossal failure. On the one hand, champions of traditional education and its trappings exhort us to place more emphasis on the basic values of education (whatever that means) and to reaffirm the principles of neighborhood schools and local control. On the other hand, the most vocal critics of American education in its

present form suggest radical transformation of our education concepts, even to the point of "deschooling" American society, since the vary concept of "school" in itself is part of the problem.

Of course the way out of this dilemma lies somewhere between these two positions, although my own proclivities tend toward the latter. Nevertheless, whichever way we turn, the sociopolitical implications of our move will either precipitate applause of opprobrium. Add to the problem the growing demands of linguistically different Americans for equal education opportunities via bilingual/bicultural programs and this mess of educational porridge becomes a potent and volatile brew. For we add to the compass of sociopolitical implications a whole new set of tensions which place non-traditional stresses on an already beleagured institution.

III

Unfortunately, the so-called language "problem" of Chicano children has been traditionally approached on a far too simplistic basis, for there is no one language problem but as many problems as there are children with imposed socio-educational linguistic disadvantages. Yet despite recognition of the problem, the state of language development programs for Spanish-speaking Chicano students

is catastrophic in the light of recent findings. Indeed, a recently reported estimate of the percentage of Chicano youth completing one or more years of college (1.4%) as compared with the rate of the total population (21%) is more than suggestive of the educational problems Chicano children face.

The percentage of Chicano children who are totally Spanish-speaking and, hence, monolingual in a language other than the national language is still largely undetermined, on both local and national levels. Still more difficult to assess is the status of Chicano children who speak some English but inadequate to the point of being classified as linguistically disadvantaged in English. But the crucial questions are: To what extent have the inadequacies of English language arts programs stifled and truncated the potential English language growth of Spanish-speaking Chicano children? To what extent have the cultural attitudes of Anglo-America broken the human spirit of Chicano youth? To what extent have the educational institutions--which should be the center of nourishment for our future growth--trampled the cultural and linguistic dignity of Chicano youth by insisting, perhaps too literally, on a linguistic notion about language and nationalism that has nothing to do with sound pedagogy but is simply a

reflection of Anglocentrism, a form of linguistic, cultural, and sociological prejudice?

Furthermore, why after decades of recognition does the problem not only still persist, but persists with even greater urgency? Monographs, papers, studies, and research of the 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, and 70's, have focused on the essential factors of the problem, yet little beyond gratuitous "pilot" projects emerged from the plethora of words about the problem. Almost 40 years ago, George I. Sanchez commented on the failure of American institutions to improve the situation of Spanish-speaking Americans, whom he called "forgotten people." In four decades only token efforts have been advanced by Anglo-American institutions, and these only reluctantly in the wake of federal concern.

Federal funds have made a variety of programs possible for the so-called linguistically disadvantaged. But they have failed to overcome attitudes that mitigate against linguistic progress, attitudes which point out that since the United States is an English-speaking country all "Americans" must speak and learn English. The point is a good one, but the notion fails to take into account many issues. The fact that many Spanish-speaking Mexican American children enter first grade knowing little or no

English. And in almost all elementary schools instruction in all areas is conducted only in English. The Spanish-speaking Chicano child is catastrophically and traumatically confronted with a new learning environment in a foreign language which he cannot deal with. All Americans should learn English. But the question as to how this is to be accomplished is far more fundamental an issue. To begin with, English in the situation just described is sheer folly for many Chicano students. Yet this is precisely what has been done in the past and is still being followed in the present.

Not long ago, an elementary school supervisor voiced her disapproval of bilingual programs. Yet she is responsible for overseeing several bilingual programs in a city inhabited predominantly by Spanish speaking Chicanos. With such attitudes the outcomes of federal programs are inevitable. This has been the rule rather than the exception for most federal efforts. New approaches and applications to the problem of Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans have been short-circuited by such misplaced individuals who perhaps feel that they are manning the barricades against a subversive tide of foreign influences disguised under the label of "bilingual education." For, all too often, the very people who are selected to administrate these federal

programs are the very people who have been administrating the old programs which have failed. American teachers continue to perpetuate old approaches to the problem, approaches that have failed in the past and which can only continue to fail in the future. This is why after 20 years of linguistic tinkering little progress is evident in this crucial area. The programs can not be faulted as severly as the people who have been designated to lead them. And, of course, underlying the surface strata of the problem is the mounting fear of Federalism. Many citizens who, unfortunately, are in positions to thwart progress, see in federal programs only the long arm of federal interference in problems which they think should be no one's concern but the community's. Thus, while this paper is concerned with Chicano education, it cannot help but touch in passing upon the larger human problems which are so inextricably a part of this concern.

The great failing in the educational assessment of Spanish-speaking children lies in the failure of most educators to understand the complex role of language in the development of children. Language is not personality but it is the vehicle of cultural systems and perhaps the most important variable underlying man's ability to

communicate with others, reason, deal with abstractions, and learn. Other aspects of the problem include not only definition of the target population but such factors as (a) the illusory I.Q., (b) de facto segregation, (c) self-fulfilling prophecies, (d) concepts of bilingualism, and (e) the important question of "Who should teach who?" However, the crisis in the education of Spanish-speaking children centers more on approach than on methodology; that is, more on the question of conventional beginnings versus radical innovations. Unfortunately, this conflict invariably yields a cross-purpose of objectives. The implicit assumption of those who favor the conventional approach is that all chidren begin school with the same advantage, thus belying, for the most part, the reality of the linguistic situation in the Southwest. For, the fact of the matter is that the Spanish-speaking child starts school with a deficit, with a decided disadvantage. This is not, however, "linguistic impoverishment" as some educators call it, but simply a handicap in an educational system geared specifically to the dominant national language. Traditionally the resultant (and in most cases inevitable) conclusion on the part of non-Spanish-speaking teachers and educators has been simply to identify Spanish-speaking children as either mentally "retarded" or low risk subjects.

Attempts to "prepare" or make the Spanish-speaking child "ready" for existing reading instructional programs are not new to some parts of the Southwest. Locally and federally sponsored efforts have been undertaken to improve his readiness for initial reading, either in pre-school or in pre-reading first grade programs in many parts of the Southwest. Few are carefully and scientifically evaluated. Experimental studies of these programs are not noted in the literature, particularly those dealing with Spanish-speaking children. Of those located, one series tends to report significant differences favoring experimental groups in various criterion outcomes. Other studies report less promising results in comparisons between treatment groups. In a review of the literature on Head Start Programs, one researcher found that many positive effects resulted for populations of disadvantaged children. From these studies, one can hypothesize that it is likely that under special conditions and for specific populations of childrens, certain types of pre-school and pre-reading programs can contribute in many ways towards making Spanish-speaking children somewhat more ready for a common reading program. It can be reasoned that goals, organization, experiences, flexible programming and continuous appraisal must be intermeshed in such programs. Attention to local conditions

and individual child needs must include taking into account what first grade requires of these children. Some studies of the problem reflect the complexities of the situation and the need for more research in this area. Any number of researchers have pointed out that the richness and fluency of a child's language background is of great importance in reading. Spanish-speaking children or children of limited English-speaking ability cannot be considered, in most cases, to have become fluent enough in English and ready enough to begin formal English reading experiences. A six-week summer program (or even one of a year's duration) might help in gaining some degree of facility in English and possibly alleviate some debilitating influences handicapping them in a reading program. But these children, in spite of their gains in pre-school work, are still faced with going to school and having to learn to read in English at the same time and in the same materials as their more advantaged English-speaking contemporaries.

Studies measuring and appraising intelligence have borne out the fallacy of the notion that Mexican American students are less intelligent than their Anglo counterparts. We are all aware now of the extent to which culture and language influence performance in intelligence tests.

Furthermore, Mexican American students have as much or greater desire to obtain good grades in school. Moreover, as one report pointed out, "there appears to be little or no difference between Mexican-American families and other families with respect to the amount of emphasis on education that the child experiences in the home." Yet Chicanos continue to be low men on the totem pole of educational and occupational achievement. In language arts classes or programs, Chicanos continue to score poorly, sometimes barely passing but more often than not, failing. The same continues to be true in college English classes. Is it language difficulties which continue to impair the academic performance of Spanish-speaking Chicanos or is it something else? One researcher goes on to suggest that perhaps "Chicano children may not have as much confidence in their ability to succeed in school as their classmates." Again, the nature of the linguistic problems of Spanish-speaking Chicano students is a matter of conjecture and speculation.

Certainly the preceding factors bear to some extent on the educational problem of Chicanos. But some factors like legal and de facto segregation have borne more heavily on the problem also. For instance, in California the segregation of Mexican American youngsters was not

outlawed until 1947, and in Texas the decision in the Delgado Case (June 15, 1948) finally restrained the segregation of Chicanos in Texas schools. Both of these decisions were rendered just a little over thirty years ago. Yet despite the elimination of legal segregation, there exists in many Southwestern communities a de facto kind of segregation that is equally insidious and devastating. Many schools in such communities, located in predominantly Chicano neighborhoods and ghettoes, continue to foster the same kinds of attitudes on the part of teachers, counselors, and principles that were fostered by the schools set aside for Chicanos under legal segregation. The administration of these schools is still Anglo dominated. And, in the main, Chicano teachers in these school systems are assigned to schools with high or total Chicano populations. When they are assigned to schools with a high Anglo population, they are usually assigned as foreign language teachers, rarely or almost never as language arts or English teachers.

For the most part, though, Spanish-speaking Chicano children have been exposed in first grade to English-speaking Anglo American teachers with little or no knowledge of the cultural-linguistic background of their charges. Why should they? For they were prohibited from

instructing in any language but English, except for foreign language teaching. Needless to say, Anglo-American fidelity to the letter of the law did not allow for interpreting instruction in English in grades K through 3 as foreign language instruction and thus providing the teacher with the necessary leeway to communicate with the Spanish-speaking youngsters in the only language they know: Spanish. Instead, the problem was compounded by taking time out from the regular curriculum to teach them English. The result was the addition of a year to the elementary curriculum, and the consequence of such an addition has been over-aged students in the latter grades. Identified as linguistically retarded many of these students became academically demoralized to the point that dropping-out was the only solution for their lack of interest, lack of motivation, and lack of achievement.

When this happens, of course, the sometimes voiced contention "that most Chicanos are just not interested in education" seems to be reinforced. This kind of self-fulfilling prophecy is the most devastating. Thus, in considering the pyscho-cultural factors in the acquisition of language and reading skills by Spanish-speaking students in the Southwest, the most critical factor to be considered is the "school environment." Despite the conclusions of

the Coleman Report which cites the differences in the background of students as a significant variable in their education, it is the differences in the background of teachers which in fact becomes the essential variable in the education of children from diverse backgrounds, especially Spanish-speaking children. For example, in their research, Rosenthal and Jacobson deceived a group of teachers into believing they were working with "gifted" Chicano students, when in fact the children had been selected randomly from various achievement groups. The upshot of the deception was that the "gifted" children actually progressed more rapidly than the other students simply because of the "positive attitude" of the teachers. Unfortunately, in the Southwest too many teachers approach their Spanish-speaking students with attitudes that engender only failure and disappointment instead of achievement.

IV

Unlike Blacks who had become "invisible" in the American scene, Chicanos were simply "forgotten" by time and tide until their renascence sometime in the 1960's. In due time, a quantitative body of literature came into being by credentialed Mexicanologists who became the information gurus of the Chicano phenomenon. Yet, despite

this impressive collection of "literature" about Chicanos, their lot in American society has been altered only minimally. Indeed, Chicanos are just a bit more visible in areas dominated by Anglos just a few years ago. But by and large the sociometric and edumetric data and statistics on Chicanos has improved little. This is startling, considering the fairly accurate social and educational profiles of Chicanos. A plethora of programs have been devised to improve the social and educational disparity of Chicanos, but the realities of Chicano life remain unchanged as we move into the 1980's.

The principal reason, I suggest, is that the focus of attention has been on the patient and the cure instead of the doctor and the tools used to restore the well-being of the patient. Before Lister's concept of antiseptics, doctors blamed the deaths of their patients on the patients rather than on their own methods. It was preposterous to question their own practices and attitudes about medicine. And so countless patients died until the medical profession finally acknowledged the innovative suggestions of Lister. This has been the ever-recurring history of progress.

In American education today, the concept of preparing the child for the common curriculum is a doctrine difficult to dispalce, though new theories argue for innovative

approaches to the education of American minorities, especially linguistic minorities. But American educators continue in their old ways, obdurately indoctrinated to their bones by the traditional philosophy which they insist worked well for millions of American children and will work for Chicanos. And American minority children keep "dying" educationally while the Listerian reformer keeps telling them how to save the children. Only recently have American educators stopped to listen to educational theories about creating curricula around children, where they are, instead of preparing children for curricula where it is.

Nevertheless, the advance is nominal at best, for the problem of educating America's minority children requires massive federal aid and intervention at a fraction of our annual expenditures for defense. Considering the deficiencies of the educational system, minority children continue to perform in schools at a fairly predictive rate. What this means for Chicanos is that few of them manage to get through high school, and even fewer go on to college. Of those who make it to college, a scant few graduate and go on to professional or graduate school. The upshot is that today there are still too few Chicanos with Ph.D. degrees in the whole country.

But colleges, like the high schools before them,

continue to see the problem of minority education in terms of the "patient" instead of their "practices." They engage in remedial program after remedial program in trying to prepare the minority student for the college curriculum. The pitiful success of such remediation lies in the shameful statistics which keep indicating that Chicanos are "disappearing" somewhere along the way. In truth, Chicanos start disappearing in the educational spectrum somewhere along about the 10th grade of high school. The tragedy is that the dropout rate for Chicanos is still higher than the national rate. As yet there are few studies which indicate the rate at which Chicanos drop out of college. Although in one college study of dropouts the Chicano sampling indicated that "the observed difference in dropout rate when tested statistically is significant." The study indicates further that "there are also significant findings to the effect that Chicanos have poorer grade-point averages."

But the problems of the Chicano student who aspires to a college education are directly tied to the existing socio-cultural context. The opportunity structure for the Chicano minority as a whole is a severely limiting one. The central point that even a cursory review of the relevant statistics bring home is that the majority of Chicanos are

victims caught in a vicious cycle of economic deprivation--LOW EDUCATION LEVELS BEGET LOW OR NO EMPLOYMENT WHICH LEADS TO LOW ECONOMIC STATUS. This cyclic combination of socio-economic factors predictably locks Chicano youth into a strangling web of poor aspirations, alienation, negativism, delinquency, and anomic behaviors in a self-perpetuating manner. Unemployment, under-employment, and low economic status are a direct result typically of the Chicanos's inability to compete in the job market due to low levels of education. Lack of proper educational credentials prevent Chicanos from securing adequate employment which predictably places low ceilings of opportunities with few avenues open for upward mobility. Thus, higher education relative to the Chicano is embedded in the social context which traditionally has been unresponsive to his needs. Fortunately, this situation is beginning to change here and there, but the task which lies ahead is a truly gigantic one which will require major expenditures of human, material, and financial resources.

Specifically, the problems faced by the Chicano who attempts to secure a college education are: (1) entrance requirements obstacles, (2) discriminatory admission and retention rules, (3) inadequate or limited finances, (4) poor secondary school preparation, (5) inadequate career

guidance in high school, (6) discriminatory grading practices, (7) insensitive faculty, (8) inflexible curriculum, (9) inadequate support services such as tutoring, (10) and finally insufficient efforts on the part of institutions of higher education to become directly involved in the problems of the Chicano community.

To Chicanos it seems almost incongrous that the American dream is so firmly rooted in education--a process which has rejected them so traumatically that they have come to feel like strangers in their own land. An accident of history and geography has created an ethnic isolation where literacy has become the exception rather than the rule. If education is truly the answer to the blight of poverty, then ideed there must be a new coalition between the forces of government and the forces of poverty to bring about the long overdue transformation of American education in terms of the American dream. Universal higher education must become a reality if the aspirations of American society as a whole are to be realized. The reality of American democratic ideals is in the consummation. If higher education is to contribute significantly to the upward social mobility of Chicanos, then the colleges and universities of this country must show a willingness and a desire to enroll them despite their previous academic records or

conditions of poverty. Policies governing college admissions must be tempered with the realities of American socio-economic life. The quaint and antiquated concept of the college as the guardian of some universal wisdom belongs to an era and tradition of elitism that does not square with the concepts of modern democracy.

In the final analysis, it may be the schools themselves which are impeding the progress of amelioration for American minority groups, else why are so many campuses fraught with ethnic distemper at the way things are? The medieval renaissance assumptions of what a university should be belong to another world, another time. Professors are no longer initiators into the mysteries of learning. They are human beings struggling with the same problems of survival as their students. They should be human beings lending a helping hand to other less fortunate human beings. In a democracy, the university should be the last place for elitist doctrines. Yet is is Newman's elitist and inegalitarian idea of a university which pervades the thinking of most college professors and administrators. The groves of academic must not be allowed to become the Tuileries of blue-blooded intellectual aristocrats. If a college or university helps Mexican Americans achieve vocational success, then it will have played its

part in the fructification of the American dream. Otherwise, the reluctance of colleges to undertake the task at hand can only add to the precarious balance of social unrest in this country. The university can no longer just talk about equality, it must become the bastion of that equality. It must, at the very least, make a percipient thrust in that direction.

The great educational experiment of the World War II GI Bill paid off remarkably well for this country. Many of today's professional Mexican Americans are products of this government assisted and financed program. And though there is at present a GI Bill for cold war GI's and Vietnam veterans, a higher education government sponsored act for disadvantaged minorities (in time perhaps for all young people) would help considerably in easing the socio-economic plight of Mexican Americans who for one reason or another are not eligible for other government assistance. This should be no febrile attempt, but one borne of recognition and deliberation of the problem confronting American society as it approaches the 21st century.

Some organizations like the Latin American Educational Foundation of Colorado, founded in 1949, award grants and loans to Spanish-named students of the state. But the effort is meager compared to the vast numbers of Spanish-

speaking Americans who need financial assistance to get to college and to stay there.

Everywhere, Chicano educators outrightly advocate elimination of all entrance requirements for Mexican Americans and for the establishment of Chicano Studies Programs that are more pragmatically attuned to the needs and necessities of the Chicano community. One Chicano document cites the lack of corazon and relevance on college campuses as the causes for the limited enrollment of Chicanos. Chicano student from predominantly barrio and colonia backgrounds enter the almost exclusively middle-class, Anglo-American environment of colleges and universities to their own detriment and possible alienation.

Like the Blacks, Chicanos reject the assimilationist concepts of American education only because more and more of them have been victimized by the all too apparent racist character of American schools and American society. But it is not too late to reverse the trend. What we have failed to commit to education in the 60's and 70's we should now double or treble in the 80's in an earnest effort to reinfuse the concept of equal educational opportunity with new vigor, life, and meaning. What is at stake is not just the amelioration of Chicanos but the amelioration of American society. Otherwise, we shall only perpetuate the distorted images of Chicanos in that infinity of mirrors.